

Dear Senator Fonfara, Representative Horn, Senator Martin, Representative Cheeseman, and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

My name is Bryan Chong. I am a resident of New Britain and a member of the Recovery for All coalition.

I am testifying in support of HB 5673. I was born and raised in Hong Kong, and came to Connecticut nearly 9 years ago as an international student – graduating from Kent School and Wesleyan University. While many Americans are familiar with Hong Kong’s struggle for democracy, folks may not realize that Hong Kong has, since 1997, been consistently ranked as one of the freest economies in the world, with famously low taxes on the rich and corporations.

Connecticut and Hong Kong have both consistently topped the ranks of highest wealth gaps in the country and the world. Young people in both places – many of whom are job-seekers, fresh out of college like myself – are unable to afford rising costs of living. As wages remain stagnant, housing conditions worsen, the hope of having a family and the abundant lives remotely close to our parents’ generation grow dimmer every day into despondency and hopelessness. In my work as an organizer for various campaigns supporting working families, I have seen this despondency and hopelessness all over Connecticut, and it is painful to watch – especially because I know the terrible depths that these situations can lead to. In Hong Kong, I watched throughout my entire life as wealth inequality has culminated in massive political and social turmoil, as young people and the working and middle class find no hope in a government that fails to meet their basic economic needs, that fails to inspire hope that a better world is possible. There is no reason why the richest state in the richest country in the world should have such deep poverty, hopelessness, and despondency. With these tax equity bills, we in Connecticut have an opportunity to do better – indeed, to become a national leader creating a just society.

On a more personal note, I am rare among Wesleyan University students in that I chose to remain here in Connecticut after I graduated, unlike many others who moved to New York or Massachusetts. Over the last decade, I have found and made a home here with wonderful, compassionate people who have shown me the utmost hospitality and welcome over the last nine years. So, it saddens me that many Connecticut college graduates leave this state and its beautiful and vibrant people. With tax equity, we can give Connecticut college graduates a greater incentive to stay here, to find stability and community, to contribute to our economy and society in the many great ways we are educating them to do.

After nine years, I am proud to call myself a Nutmegger. I came to Connecticut in search of a better life, a more hopeful destiny. Testifying for this bill is part of my way to help realize this destiny, and to express gratitude to a state whose working people have taught me the value of solidarity, the value of staying rooted in community. With tax equity, myself and many others will be able to continue championing the values of love and solidarity in Connecticut.

Sincerely,
Bryan Chong
New Britain